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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the effect that hands-on, creative activity using the Language Experience Approach would have on language usage in students' written stories. Twenty-five fifth grade students were randomly divided into three sample groups. Sample A received hands-on, creative stimulus and art materials; Sample B looked at and discussed pictorial stimulus; and Sample C received the same stimuli as both sample A and B. The language output of each group story written by the students was analyzed and compared. The final results indicated that a hands-on, creative approach alone did not present a stimulus different than did the other approaches in encouraging language output. (One table of data is included, and 25 references are attached.) (Author)

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Creative Activities in the Language Experience Approach to Teaching Reading

By
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Master of Arts Degree in Reading Specialization

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April, 1990

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect that hands-on, creative activity in the Language Experience Approach would have on language usage in written stories.

Twenty-five fifth grade students were randomly divided into three sample groups. Sample A received hands-on, creative stimulus and art materials, Sample B looked at and discussed pictorial stimulus, and Sample C received the stimulus of both Sample A and B. The language output of each group story was analyzed and compared.

The final results indicated that a hands-on, creative approach alone did not present a stimulus different than the other approaches in encouraging language output.

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"For the "Dark Ages" in the western world, and for millions of people in underdeveloped countries and continents, down to our own day, illiteracy among the masses was redeemed only by communication through the art forms, and it seems, therefore, that art, speech, writing and reading, have always been natural and closely related means of communication" (Bookbinder, 1975, p.783).

In contemporary educational research, the Language Experience Approach to the teaching of reading has proven to be a strong and effective method of providing opportunities for the student to acquire language and reading skills through experiences which are meaningful to the child.

A stimulating topic is presented to students and a discussion follows. A group of children work on a creative project, and converse during the exploration and construction. At the end of the discussion or activity, the students dictate a story about their experience, as the teacher records it, in their exact words. The story is read by the teacher, then by the pupils, and later on, special words may be pulled from the story to illustrate something of importance, such as a phonics generalization, an example of rhyming words, or words with affixes. Authors Burns, Roe and Ross (1984) point out that by way of LEA, the children have provided the reading material, and can then see the relationship between oral language and reading. Thus, the skill of reading is growing out of natural, ongoing activities.

In "Learning to Read Through Experience", authors Lee and Allen (1963) present some of the basic premises of their book:

1. The communications skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are closely interrelated.
2. Reading is completely interwoven with all the other language arts.
3. Reading is concerned with words that arouse meaningful responses based on the individual experiences of the learner.

4. Reading is developing meaning from patterns of symbols which one recognizes and endows with meaning. Reading arouses or calls up meanings. It does not provide them.

In the closed system of education, they continue, children are given an education, by the passing on of our knowledge, systems of discovery and findings, and they are rewarded for their conformity. The open system, however, gives children access to "varied and rich learnings of the past...(and) permits originality, experimentaion, invention and initiative. Its environment promotes and permits creativity" (Lee and Allen, 1963, p.3).

Affective thinking and the discovery approach are integral components of LEA, author Marino (1980) states, in "Where Comprehension Leads the Way". The reader and writer are one and the same, creating and comprehending his or her own dialogue. The almost flawless oral reading of an LEA story by one student surprised a teacher. The student responded to her surprise by saying, "It was easy, I didn't have to keep stopping to figure out what it meant!" (Marino, 1980, p.5) Sylvia Ashton-Warner used "organic" words, those with personal meaning in the child's life, in an approach which was similar to LEA, with Maori children learning to read.

In fact, LEA is especially helpful when teaching culturally disadvantaged children reading skills. In a study comparing LEA to the basal reader approach, Serwer (1969) found that low SES black children, living in poverty conditions,not only could be brought up to average reading achievement, but by the third year, showed gain over the basal reading group. Hall (1970) stresses that LEA provides a situation in which the child is able to read, because he is certain of the content of the story. She recommends LEA as an approach for: initial reading instruction, remedial and culturally deprived children and as a supplement to other approaches.

Rusnak (1980) and Hall and Ramig (1978) point out that children enter school as fluent users of language, having

learned it "through natural exposure in their environment and efforts to communicate" (Hall and Ramig, 1978, p. 21-22). LEA focuses on the language abilities, experiences and motivation of children, rather than on pre-determined schedules for skill mastery.

In the preface to the accounts of nationwide studies of first grade reading programs, Stauffer (1967) strongly recommends the reader to evaluate each beginning reading approach according to its own worth. The basic conclusions were that no one approach was superior to another, and not one of the approaches, LEA among them, eliminated reading disability in the first grade.

Hahn (1967), a participant in The First Grade Reading Studies, investigated three approaches to beginning reading instruction, and found that the ITA and LEA subjects wrote extensively and with enthusiasm throughout the school year, but that the Basic Reader group evidenced less written material. He concluded that more meaningful reading vocabularies could be developed through opportunities to record thoughts and experiences.

Researchers Vilscek, Morgan and Cleland (1967) cited some higher mean scores for the LEA subjects of their study, on tests of Word and Paragraph Meaning, Vocabulary and Word Study, when they compared them to the basal reader group.

However, Stauffer stresses, in almost every case, the basal reader approach, when compared with another approach, came out second best. Statistical procedures and methods of reporting were not uniform from study to study, and the tests measuring readiness, intelligence and achievement were not adequate, as the reviews in Buros' "Mental Measurements Yearbook" will confirm.

Harris and Morrison (1969) support LEA as a supplement to other approaches beyond the beginning stages of reading instruction, and the teachers involved in The CRAFT Project preferred to continue using elements from both LEA and the basal reader approach, in their reading classes.

Stauffer (1980) gives some insights concerning the foundations of LEA, particularly when he states that the term experience-language approach is actually a more "lucid, descriptive accounting of a means to an ends ...because they represent the concrete richness that becomming involved in first-hand functional situations promoting verbal interactions can produce" (Stauffer, 1980, p.2). Instruction can generate a system of language which the child uses to satisfy his own purposes.

He continues, in asserting that there is total communication, when the language arts, or verbal arts, are coupled with the iconic arts of, for example, drawing or painting. "Any representation becomes a language-experience construct...because symbolizing does not occur in an experience vacuum...and language is only one of a number of ways by which we represent the world" (p.3).

Genishi (1983) provides the reader with a look at a curriculum developed for a bilingual kindergarten class, in which an approach similar to LEA, was used. Past, Past and Guzman (1980) report that the majority of the children in one classroom became readers by the end of the kindergarten year, because the "talk" these children engaged in, after cooking or going on a field trip, was written down by the teacher, so that it could be read.

Not only is the process of first-hand experiences and the outgrowth of writing and reading consistent with schema theory, according to Burns, Roe and Ross (1984), but it is also consistent with the theories of a wide range of educators, such as Froebel and Piaget, who concurred that children should be taught from the concrete to the abstract (Gaitskell and Hurwitz, 1970). Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Montaigne and Bacon advocated the first-hand experiences rather than "logic chopping".

"One can also conclude," says Bookbinder (1975, p. 783), "that in education today, the inter-relationshio of these means of expression (art, speech, writing and reading) should be kept

in mind so that we may better serve the needs of enriching any one means (reading) by the use of the other related means (the arts)."

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that the tactile, hands-on approach with creative activities in the Language Experience Approach is not more effective in facilitating broader and more creative uses of language than the use of pictorial stimuli in the language Experience Approach, or a combined tactile-pictorial Language Experience Approach.

Definitions

Language Experience Approach: A method used in the field of teaching reading, in which students participate in a shared experience, and dictate the story of their experience to their teacher; the story is recorded by the teacher onto large, lined paper, with no attempt to correct grammar or direct the story line in any way. The teacher reads the story back to the students, moving her hand from left to right under the sentences as she reads. The students then read the story aloud as a group, or independently. Follow-up activities may include drawings, or special attention to particular words, from which the teacher may elicict a phonics generalization, for example, from the students. The four areas of language arts, listening, speaking, reading and writing, are inter-related in LEA, and the experiences of the children are the basis for the reading material.

Procedures

The subjects in this experiment were twenty-five fifth grade students attending Christ the King School in Hillside, New Jersey during the 1989 - 1990 school year. The students were randomly divided into three samples.

Sample A was presented with a tactile stimulus, which

provided opportunities for hands-on, creative work by the students. A large model of a log cabin (2 h x 3 w x 17 deep) with a loft and a model of a covered wagon (1 long) were placed on a table. The objects could be accessed from all sides.

Materials such as cardboard, cloth, small pieces of wood, twigs, modeling clay and wire were available to the students, as well as scissors, glue, brads, crayons and markers.

The discussion opened with a question: What could life have been like on the American frontier? After a discussion, the students were encouraged to "play" with the objects, and to use the materials to create needed items for frontier life. Their story was recorded, and read back to them. Students took turns reading the story, and could write it on their own paper if they wished.

Sample B was presented with a variety of pictorial stimulus. Photographs (xeroxed from books and magazines) were arranged in collage form on the blackboard, as they discussed what life could have been like on the American frontier. (Books were not set out for browsing, because this experiment involved only tactile and pictorial stimuli, and not written stimuli.)

After discussion, the students' story was recorded and read back to them. They read the story aloud, and could write it down if they wished.

Sample C received both the tactile stimuli of Sample A, and the pictorial stimuli of Sample B. Discussion, recording, reading and writing(if desired by the student) followed in the same manner as in Samples A and B.

The stories of each group were examined for uses of language, specifically, scope of vocabulary, phrasing, descriptive words and phrases, and the structure and length of sentences. The results of each group were analyzed and compared.

Results

The results of this experiment as shown in Table I

indicates: 1. a difference in length between the three sample group stories, with Sample A having the shortest story (180 words) and Sample C having the longest story (247 words). 2. The number of syllables per sentence also varied between the sample groups - as reflected in the counts for estimation of readability. 3. On the Fry Graph for Estimating Readability, Sample A was plotted at mid to end of Grade Level 5, Sample B was plotted at beginning Grade Level 7, and Sample C was plotted at mid Grade 6 Level. 4. Transitional words/phrases were used 8 times by Sample A, 7 times by Sample B, and 6 times by Sample C throughout their respective stories.

Table I

Scores on Measures Obtained from Written Discourse

Group	Total Words	Form Class Words	Function Words	T-Units	Words per T-Unit	Sentences
A	180	82	98	19	4.42	13
B	204	109	95	18	3.88	14
C	247	132	115	27	5.18	14

Group	Words per Sentence	T-Units per Sentence	Nouns	Verb Types	Adjectives	Total Adverbs
A	13.92	1.46	28	23	9	9
B	14.64	1.28	35	25	15	7
C	14.47	1.58	39	33	28	12

Group	Adverbs before Verb	Adverbs after Verb	Adverbs of Time	Adverbs of Place	Adverbs of Manner	Other Adverbs
A	4	6	6	1	2	1
B	10	1	2	1	3	1
C	10	3	0	1	8	3

Table 1 - Continued

Group	Pre-fixes	Suf-fixes	Prepositional Phrases	Readability Level	Transitional Words
A	0	1	13	mid-end Grade 5	8
B	0	4	12	beg. Grade 7	7
C	2	4	16	mid. Grade 6	6

An examination of the components of Sample A's story revealed a higher number of T-units (19), words per T-unit (4.42), T-units per sentence (1.46), and total number of adverbs used (10) in their story than those of Sample B. Sample A had a total of 180 words, 13 sentences, with an average of 13.92 words per sentence. Their form class word (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) total was 82, and functional word total was 98. The suffix -ly was used 3 times, as compared to the use of 4 different suffixes throughout their stories by Sample Groups B and C. No prefixes were used. In the total use of 10 adverbs, 6 were of time, 1 of place, and 2 of manner. Four adverbs were used before the verb, and 6 were used after the verb. There were 9 adjectives used, comparitively lower than Sample B's 15, and Sample C's 28. There were 13 prepositional phrases, 1 higher than Sample B, but 3 less than Sample C.

In Sample B's story, there were 204 words used, an average of 14.64 words for each of the 14 sentences. There were 109 form class words and 95 functional words. A total of 18 T-units, with an average of 3.88 words per T-unit, and an average of 1.28 T-units per sentence was found. Fifteen adjectives were used throughout the story, as well as 12 prepositional phrases and 4 suffixes. No prefixes were used. Out of the 7 adverbs used, 2 were of time, 1 of place, and 3 of manner. Ten times an

adverb was used before the verb, and once after the verb.

A total of 247 words were used in Sample C's story, averaging 14.47 words in each of the 17 sentences. In each of the 27 T-units, there was an average of 5.18 words per unit, a significantly higher count than in the other samples. There were 1.58 T-units per sentence. Form class words totaled 132, and functional words totaled 115. Adverbs were used 10 times before the verb, and 3 times after the verb. There were no adverbs of time, 1 of place, and 8 of manner. Sample C was the only group to use prefixes (2), and used a total of 4 different suffixes. Sample C also used a higher amount of adjectives (28) than either sample. There were 16 prepositional phrases.

Conclusions and Implications

Since all characteristics except readability and suffixes favored the treatment of Sample C's story, one could conclude that Sample C's story revealed the benefits of both pictorial and hands-on, creative stimulus. Sample A's use of transitional words/phrases was not higher than that of Sample B or C, and the readability level, although on target for their present grade level in school, was lower than that of Sample B (beg. Grade Level 7) and Sample C (mid. Grade Level 6). Perhaps significantly, Sample A did not write a title for their story, as did Samples B and C.

The pictorial stimulus appears to have been a strong motivational factor in the cases of Sample B and C. It provided a more specific and encompassing framework for discussion. Details from the discussion were elaborated upon more expansively in Sample B and Sample C stories.

Based on this data, the hypothesis of this study that hands-on, creative activity alone would not present a stimulus different than the other approaches in encouraging language output was accepted.

The Language Experience Approach: Related Research

The combination of language, art and activity can contribute to reading and writing skills. Art and experiencial activities contribute to language growth, and appropriate follow-up activities can reinforce those acquired skills. Children may become better readers and at the same time develop an appreciation for reading. As applied to education, this method of combining a child's inherent language with shared experience is called the Language Experience Approach (LEA).

According to Stauffer (1965), Language (arts) encompasses the four facets of language,(listening, speaking, reading and writing) and experience encompasses an individual's concept and perception of the world; interests and curiosities, creativity and capacity to learn. Children enter school at widely varying levels of language ability, and these levels of ability must be determined in order for individualized and group instruction to be effective and meaningful. Through LEA, meaning can be stressed, the linkage between written words and the child's own vocabualry and cognitive processes can be developed, and words are introduced and stressed as a part of the communication process, with word attack skills taught as a "first-aid" to meaning.

As a readiness tool, Stauffer (1967), Pikulski (1978), Hall (1970), Allen (1963) and educators across our country recommend LEA, because it "teaches to strengths, it encompasses comprehension and it can be used diagnostically" (Christensen, 1984, p.1). Christensen points out that after the child's needs and strengths are understood, "appropriate strategies and activities" are planned and needs are met through LEA, using activities which are tailor made to the child, as he moves at his own pace.

Educators are reminded of children's "intrinsic capabilities which allow them to observe, experiment, discover, synthesize and learn", as they observe students "progressing through the highly sophisticated and complex states of language

acquisition" (Rusnak, 1980, p.33). LEA facilitates a language thinking process in a classroom structure that is flexible, accomodating individual growth, ability, interests and self-regulated study. According to Piagetian theory, children can and should structure their own learning (Meagher, 1980, p.30).

According to Klein (1980), a child is not violating rules of language in his early stages when he doesn't use correct grammar in his stories, but is thinking and writing in a way that makes sense in his cognitive world, and is therefore using language reasonably. Klein further states that since the "cognitive facility and linguistic repertoire of the learner isn't equivalent at all stages of development", LEA could be a strong vehicle for guiding the child in his acquisition of language arts learning.

In "Breakthrough in Beginning Reading: Language Experience Approach", Pienaar (1977) descrbes "Breakthrough to Literacy", a beginning reading program based on LEA, in which a first grade and a second grade class in the Saskatoon schools wrote and exchanged with one another, their own reading materials. In April of 1975, at the end of six months of exposure to this method, the grade one children were posttested and found to be reading at a grade level of 2.6, and the second graders at grade level 3.7

Not only did the posttests reveal significant gains, but the children exhibited confidence and enthusiasm as they wrote in order to be read, and looked forward to reading in order to write more effectively. "Breakthrough" facilitated peer-education and children were encouraged to evolve their own learning strategies.

Before continuing an examination of the studies and research on LEA, it can be stated that LEA provides an instructional framework in which a child's interests and personal involvement play a key role in developing the relationship between listening, speaking, writing and reading (Hall, 1970). In the total reading program, LEA can be used as

(1) an approach for initial reading instruction; (2) a supplement to other approaches beyond the beginning stages; (3) an approach for remedial readers; and (4) an approach for culturally disadvantaged children.

In 1964, the U.S. Office of Education sponsored The First Grade Reading Studies, documented in 1967 by the International Reading Association, Inc. In the preface to the studies, Russell G. Stauffer explains that because of many variables which were not uniformly controlled in the twenty-seven studies, the studies should not be compared to see which ones were most productive,but rather each study should be examined on its own premises and results.

In "The Effectiveness of Language Arts and Basic Reader Approaches to First Grade Reading Instruction", Stauffer (1967) undertook his study to determine how effective LEA would be from the beginning of reading instruction. Fourteen specific objectives were posed, questioning whether there would be significant differences between the two treatment groups in the areas of pretest measures as predictors of achievement, posttest performances on Stanford Achievement Test, word recognition ability of random samples, oral reading performances, writing mechanics, spelling and total number of running words, and in comparisons of the boys and girls performances on the Stanford Achievement Test.

The LEA was designed to utilize the children's facility to communicate through oral and written language, creative writing and dramatics, puppetry, and drawing and painting. Using the children's own oral and written words, intensive word attack training began at once. After some thinking-reading skills were developed through group instruction and interaction, and the children were able to read at a first grade level, the reading instruction time was divided equally between group instruction with basic readers, creative writing, and individualized instruction with self-selected literature.

The second treatment group used the basal readers and their teachers were instructed to follow the outline of instruction in

the teacher's manual.

The results of the six posttests administered to 433, five to six year old first grade subjects revealed that overall, with the exception of arithmatic and vocabulary,the children in the experimental group (LEA) scored significantly higher on the tests of Word Reading, Paragraph Meaning and Spelling, and the populations were equall on the tests of Word Study Skills and Vocabulary. In conclusion to his report, Stauffer stresses the need for tests which more adequately show the gains in language skills resulting from the LEA. He generally concludes that LEA is an effective method in beginning reading instruction, and produced excellent results in reading performance, word attack skills, spelling, vocabulary development, creative writing and handwriting. The teachers who were reticent to participate in the LEA at the beginning of the study, were, by the end of the year, enthusiastic about using it and praised the approach highly.

Researchers Vilscek, Morgan and Cleland (1967) in "Coordinating and Integrating Language Arts Instruction in First Grade", examined the effects and outcomes of the coordinated basal language arts approach and the integrated experience approach (LEA). Approximately 750 first grade students were randomly assigned to the two instructional approaches. The teachers employing the coordinated basal language arts approach were provided with all of the materials in the Scott, Foresman "Listen, Speak and Write" program, and they were encouraged to use as many enrichment materials as was possible, such as filmstrips, self-directive and self-corrective material, library and trade books. The whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one instruction was organized to be as flexible as possible. In the integrated experience approach (LEA), teachers provided numerous opportunities for the students to perceive, listen and interact orally, recording the childrens expressions on charts. These natural language patterns served in the development of auditory-visual-discriminitive abilities, motor abilities, sight vocabulary, phonetic application, comprehension abilities and

oral reading skills. When a child reached the primer instructional level, the transition from reading chart stories to reading books was made. The teachers were given guidelines for implementing developmentaly defined experiences in the "I.E.A.C. (Integrated Experience Approach to Communication) Guide", thus ensuring some methodological stability.

The children in the LEA group had significantly higher mean scores than the basal group, on the Word Meaning, Paragraph Meaning, Vocabulary and Word Study sections of the Stanford Achievement Test, and on the San Diego Pupil Attitude inventory. They also scored higher on the Gates Word List, Karlsen Word List, Creative Writing Mechanics Ratio, and the Flexibility and Elaboration Indices of the Product Improvement Task, Minnesota Tests of Creative Thinking.

During the 1964-65 school year, Hahn (1967) investigated "Three Approaches to Beginning Reading Instruction - ITA, Language Arts and Basic Readers" in a study that involved 36 teachers in twelve school districts in Oakland County, Michigan. Hahn's premise was that renewed focus on the relationships among reading, writing, speaking and listening skills was well worth investigating in regard to beginning reading instruction. He agrees with Strickland (1962) in that the language patterns of the child entering school are more sophisticated and interesting than than the writers of textbooks would have us believe, and asserts that Ashton-Warner (1964), Downing (1964), Mazurkiewicz (1965) and others have shown that when children are provided with skills and opportunities to write early in the reading program, they become "active and independent learners who find delight in expressing their ideas and in reading the writings of others" (Hahn, 1967, p.31). Is a child extending his potential to learn when he models his writing on the limited language patterns of the primer?

There were approximately three hundred children in each treatment group. The ITA and LEA students wrote extensively throughout the school year, and their teachers remarked on their enthusiasm and independence. There appeared to be less time for

writing in the basic reader approach group, and less writing was evident. Hahn concluded, that it appeared to be advantageous to drop the use of readiness workbooks, preprimers and primers in order to give children the time and opportunities to engage in their own thoughts and record their own experiences, thus developing more meaningful reading vocabularies.

In fact, Packer (1970) concludes his study of the key vocabularies of Follow-Through kindergarten and first grade students in four different school systems, by stating that the basal vocabulary and the words children ask to learn tend to differ significantly. In "Ashton-Warner's Key Vocabulary for the Disadvantaged", Packer maintains that the majority of our nations advantaged children will learn to read, in spite of differences in materials or methods. "But...for those children who have a limited background of experiences and meager language skills, a dynamic, real approach is called for. The Sylvia Ashton-Warner methods are just that" (Packer, 1970, p.559).

In the Ashton-Warner method, children ask to learn words, their own words. This "key", or "organic" vocabulary comes out of the child's life experiences, and this essentially language experience approach will develop skills of speaking, listening, reading , writing and usage skills.

After categorizing the key vocabulary and basal reader vocabulary into fourteen topics, Packer found that in three of the four school systems in this study, there was little or no relationship between the key vocabulary and that presented by the basal. In conclusion, he encourages the beginning reading curriculum in which pupils actively explore their world, to gain new ideas and insights to discuss, write, and read about, and a sight vocabulary can be rather easily learned at this crucial phase of reading instruction.

In examining "The Relation of Reading to Development in the Language Arts", Strickland (1955) states that the quality and extent of a child's language background has a great deal to do with how easily he learns to read. While "the child from a good language environment finds in books the kinds of words and

sentences he hears and uses...the child who has always heard and used poor language finds the choice and arrangement of words strange and unfamiliar" (Strickland, 1955, p.36). The language background acquired through listening, observing and experiencing is the foundation of the child's growth in reading.

In his outline for "Beginning Reading Programs for the Culturally Disadvantaged", Black (1965) continues in Strickland's train of thought when he asserts, "A significant body of research into the abilities of culturally disadvantaged children to communicate establishes this: these children do not listen as well as do more advantaged children; they do not speak as well; they do not read as well; they do not write as well" (Black, 1968, p.163).

We will come closer to the realities of this situation and examine possible solutions when we "discard the term "reading program"... begin to think of a "language program"...and explode the myth of the same basic reading materials for all children..." (Wilson, 1962, in an address at the Washington Conference on Culturally Disadvantaged Youth). Black stresses therefore, the value of using LEA, and the necessity of planned language instruction before the disadvantaged child enters kindergarten or first grade.

In 1964, Serwer (1969) first encountered LEA, as an experimental procedure used in the Craft Project (Comparing Reading Approaches in First-Grade Teaching). It was one of twenty-seven beginning reading projects funded by the U.S. Office of Education. The subjects chosen were 1,378 children in 48 first grade classes; 24 classes participated in the LEA, and the other 24 were instructed in the Basal Reader approach, with 12 classes additionally receiving intensive phonics instruction with the Phonovisual method.

The findings illustrated that low SES black children, living in poverty conditions, could be brought to average reading achievement. The 24 LEA classes had significant gains in reading achievement during the third year follow-up. Even though the Craft children were dispersed randomly during the

third year, in non-experimental classrooms, their gains were larger than the Basal Reader group. Serwer believes this is due to the early start on development of the children's vocabulary, syntactic structure and the expansion of their concept development. Serwer concludes "Linguistic Support for a Method of Teaching Beginning Reading to Black Children", by stating that LEA "...which accepts the child on his own level, values what children are and have within them as the basis of general learning...and with specific reference to the teaching of reading, it shows the child in concrete form that what he is, thinks and says is not only acceptable but important, indeed important enough to write down, read again, and ask others to read" (Serwer, 1969, p.464).

In support of LEA as a supplement to other approaches beyond the beginning stages, Harris and Morrison (1969), in "The CRAFT Project: A Final Report", present some information about the residual effects of the study, obtained through interviews. It appears that the teachers involved in the study prefer to use elements from both the LEA and Basal Reader approach, rather than the pure form of either one. Teachers also felt that the strengths of a variety of reading methods should be determined in developing a mode of instruction. A major finding of the National First Grade Studies was that "any approach which is enriched with features of other approaches produces better reading achievement than the use of one approach exclusively" (Hall, 1970, p.18).

In summarizing the one- to three-year studies, Spache and Spache (1973) find that there appear to be certain advantages to the use of LEA. Since the implementation of LEA varied from study to study, the lack of testing materials to specifically study gains from LEA and other variables were present, results were not identical. The approach does seem to make contributions to development of informational background, and to vocabulary and spelling in creative writing efforts. The authors present the following statements about LEA:

1. It must be recognized as an independent, effective method of teaching reading during primary levels of development.
2. It is not just an adjunct to or a preliminary stage to other methods, althogh it may be so used.
3. It is as effective in stimulating skill development among middle-class children as the basal approach.
4. Among low socioeconomic or bilingual children, the supporting evidence is weak in the first grade, but grows to equal, at least, the basal method after two years of such instruction for these atypical students.
5. In measures of quantity, quality and diversity of vocabulary in writing, the language experience appears to be superior, even in the first grade.
6. By the second grade, children trained in the language experience appraoch begin to evidence broader backgrounds in science and social studies, and better spelling than basal pupils.
7. Teachers who have been trained in the language experience method tend to modify their classroom climate toward less authoritarian relationships. And even though test results in their populations may be inconclusive, these teachers tend to realize the advantage as they apparently see in this approach by continuing to use it, even if they return to the use of the basal.
(Spache and Spache, 1973, p.258-9)

In researching the implementation of concrete art activities into the Language Experience Approach to the teaching of reading, it is first necessary to examine some of the important aspects of the first-hand experience and the concrete art experience as tools of education.

In the concluding statements on the Craft Project, Serwer points out the forceful connection between the Language Experience method and the model of learning proposed by Third Force psychologists (Maslow, 1968). While examining the

reinforcing role of "peak experiences", those frequently described by children in the LEA, Maslow remarked:

> "We must learn to treasure the "jags" of the child in school, his fascination, absorbtions, his persistent wide-eyed wonderings, his Dionysian enthusiasms. At the very least, we can value his more diluted raptures, his "interests" and hobbies, etc. They can lead to much. Especially can they lead to hard work, persistent, absorbed, fruitful, educative. (1968, p.695)

Serwer also quotes Ashton-Warner's passionate desire to reach what is alreading locked inside the child. "If only I could get it out and use it as working material. And not draw it out, either. If I had a light enough touch it would just come out under it's own volcanic power..." (Ashton-Warner, 1959, p.41)

"Pupil-impelled learning or study inspired from within, which conforms to the aptitudes, interests, raw materials, and potentialities of the child" (Serwer, 1969, p.465), is the focus of the theories of such educators as Holt, Kohl, Yeomans, Featherstone and Weber. Although James Herndon's experiments with disadvantaged children's involvement with creative first-hand experiences as an alternative to the traditional curriculum, left him feeling (along with Kohl), discouraged about the lack of permanent change in his pupils, "...it is apparent from reading his books that he did have a substantial positive impact on his pupils, and it seems certain that all of them learned more than they would have if left to their own devices" (Biehler, 1974, p.477)

In "Psychology Applied to Teaching", Biehler (1974, p.78-79) presents excerpts from "Experience and Education", by John Dewey (1938), in which Dewey expresses his belief that, "It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even activity in experience. Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had" (Dewey, 1938, p.16). He asserts that is the responsibility of the educator, as the mature member of the educational community which includes teachers and

students, to arrange for experiences which will, not only be immediately satisfying for the student, but will promote and build upon future experiences.

In examining "Strategies to Help Children Remember What They Read", Elliot and Carroll (1980) found that, among three topics which seem to facilitate a child's memory for what he or she has read, are: a) manipulation of objects that represent characters in the story, and b) the use of pictures and illustrations that depict the main theme of a papargraph. The authors cite an investigation by Wellman, Rysberg, and Sattler (1979), in which young readers' awareness and use of concrete objects was studied.

They found that in allowing the child to manipulate a story board to show the "cow jumping over the moon", an abstract word (over) was conceptualized by an activity, and this physical manipulation increased the meaning of the story. The learner is actively involved in this "concrete method of strategic intervention...and the manipulable objects serve to tie the abstract words to meaningful situations" (Elliot and Carroll, 1980, p.273).

They note that a reader's previous experience and knowledge will affect their interpretation of written materials, and this "preexisting knowledge helps the reader clarify situations, fill in the gaps, incorporate the unfamiliar into the familiar and make inferences" (Elliot and Carroll, 1980, p.274)

In examining first-hand experiences with art, in "Art and Reading", Bookbinder (1974) contends that through immersion in the tangible substances of art, the senses, thoughts and imaginations of the student are totally involved. Experiences of personal importance take place as the students "touch, shape or alter, join and build." The various forms of expression reinforce learnings, "...in that they all help make more vivid and enduring the event and perceptions experienced at first hand in the real world" (Bookbinder, 1974, P.784).

Klein (1980, p.45) states, "At the risk of oversimplifying, puppet play precedes show and tell, creative interpretation

precedes panel or small group discussion. Ritualized jokes and riddles precede puns or metaphoric allusions". However, these natural desires and pursuits of the child to construct, experiment, investigate the world around him and work with others will, in this play form, mature to carry out the work of our world. (Glace, 1964)

Glace stresses that art can be an integral part of a curriculum, not an isolated subject area. The "work" of art - drawing, construction, design - "provides contact with what educators call life-situations...it motivates many other activities, assists intellectual and emotional growth...and enriches everyday existence" (Glace, 1964, p.5).

Ives and Pond (1980) note, in "The Arts and Cognitive Development", that a historical analysis reveals that the arts have been " artificially separated from the curriculum". After the devlopment of the printing press, the reliance of the written word as the carrier of all worthwhile knowledge came into effect, gradually replacing methods of learning things of use through the direct experience of apprenticeship. Assumptions evolved into belief that abstract mental processes alone would yield truths about reality, and the physical or sensual activites were emotional or physical releases which served mainly to "balance out" the mind's activity,

Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey have challenged these notions that other areas of knowledge and skills are "extras" or mere frills unrelated to real thinking and learning. Read (1965) states that "...what we call art, and too cursorily treat as an ornament of civilization, is really a vital activity, and energy of the senses that must continually convert the dead rain of matter into radiant images of life" (Brigham, 1975, p.26).

Brigham cites a summary of the inductive procedure in teaching, in which Jones (1967) concludes that it is the task of the learner to discover the principle or identify the concept after a variety of experiences have been provided. This method of indirect teaching guides a student through relevant encounters, "until the learner, with pleasures of discovery and

self-achievement, constructs a conceptual form not previously known by the student" (Brigham, 1975, p.28). In his description of the difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary, MerleauPonty explains that, unlike prosaic writing which is limited to using a culture's accepted signs, "...great prose and poetry is the art of capturing a meaning which until then, had never been objectified, and of rendering it accessible to everyone who speaks the same language" (Hall, 1979, p.3). In light of this encouraging statement on the pursuit of the beautiful and unusual in the field of writing, it is appropriate to restate one of the summaries of Spache and Spache (1973, p.258-259), in reference to LEA: that, "In measures of quantity, quality and diversity of vocabulary in writing, the language experience appears to be superior, even in the first grade".

For both Greeks and Egyptians, one word was used to denote the action of drawing and painting and that of writing. (Glace, 1964). Bookbinder (1975) reminds the reader that the alphabet was developed on the basis of picture -writing, and since man first drew on the walls of a cave, communicating ideas for the tribe or church continued, through the uses of two- and three-dimentional art.

In "Reinforcing Remedial Readers Through Art Activities", researchers Jansson and Schillereff (1980) point out the connection between the multisensory approach with art activities, and these same visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile modes fundamental to the remedial reading programs of Fernald, and Gillingham and Stillman. They also cite the research on the "grapho-linguistic method" (Platt, 1977), in which the child's drawings, and subsequent labeling, are the basis for the beginning reading program. As the children's vocabulary grows, and labeling the drawing becomes more spontaneous, modifiers and articles are introduced and phrases and sentences are added. Lined paper and pencils are introduced at the child's request. Platt concludes, "...that the children experienced no difficulty in learning to write, perhaps because

that skill had been introduced as a meaningful art form rather than an abstract concept" (Jansson and Schillereff, 1980, p.549).

In concluding some examinations of LEA, first-hand and concrete art experiences, and examples of art in the reading program, the words of Russell G. Stauffer, one of the original National First Grade Studies researchers, convey the purposes of using art activities in the Language Experience Approach.

"Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are the verbal arts. When they are coupled with the iconic arts of sketching, painting, recording, and the like, they embrace the concept of total communication. Total communication includes the full spectrum of communication modes...and suggests clearly the involvement of people interacting freely and purposefully with people. Thus, reading instruction is based on and grows out of rich and vast experiences springing out of human interactions...(and) by using the symbolic arts as a means of getting something done and documenting experiences, a wide range of activities is covered" (Stauffer, 1980, p.2)

In sum, research shows LEA to be an effective and enriching approach in reading programs, especially in the initial stages. The approach is particulary effective with culturally disadvantaged children, and can be used as a supplement to the regular basal reader program. Many prominent educators advocate the first-hand experience as integral to meaningful learning, and research studies show a promising trend toward integrating art activities into the reading program, where they can intervene to build the experiencial backgrounds and bodies of knowledge so vital to language acquisition and learning.

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